decision in consultation with the State of Andhra Pradesh and Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) to hand over 1100 acres of land for the purpose of development of a minor port at Gangavaram subject to certain conditions which include inter-alia alternative land to that extent making available to RINL on land to land basis by Government of Andhra Pradesh. However, no definite proposal for providing alternative land has been received from the State Government of Andhra Pradesh by the Ministry of Steel and Mines.

Package for Development of Road and Inland Water Transport in Assam

1076. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have been contemplating any package for fast development and modernisation of roads and inland/riverine transport in Assam;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN: (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The river Dhubri to Sadiya has been declared as National Waterway No. 2 in 1988. It is being developed for river transportation in Assam by providing infrastructural facilities such as navigation channel, terminals and navigational aids, etc. The national Highways in Assam are receiving special attention under P.M's initiatives.

(c) Does not arise.

Tapping of Finance for Four-Lane Highways Project

1077. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO:Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the growth of road traffic since 1950;

(b) the length of highways to be widened to four lanes;

(c) the money needed for the project; and

(d) the source proposed to be tapped for financing the project and the amount earmarked in the Ninth Five Year Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRADHAN: (a) The details are as under:

	Year 1951	Year 1998
(i) Freight Traffic BTK (Billion ton Km)	6	900
(ii) Passenger Traffic (BPK) (Billion Passenger Km)	23	3038

(b) and (c) About 12,000 km of National Highway are to be widened to four/six lanes at an approximate cost of Rs. 48,000 crores at current price.

(d) Budgetary resources as well as private investment depending upon the viability of the project will be tapped. So far no specific amount has been earmarked for this project.

Conversion of State Highways into National Highways in Orissa

1078. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the total kilometer of roads in various States identified for upgradation as National Highways;

(b) the details of those roads in Orissa;

(c) the year by which the upgradation work would be completed; and

(d) the funds earmarked therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA

PRADHAN: (a) The Govt. has decided to add a length of approximately 11000 kms to the national Highway network in the country.

(b) Details are given in the Annexure. (*See Appendix* 185, *Annexure No.* 29)

(c) Development and maintenance including upgradation of national highways is a continuous process.

(d) The allocations are made State-wise for total national highway length in each State and specific national highway-wise allocation is not made.

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts

1079. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL:Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to set up a separate Export Promotion Council for handicraft items made in small cottage industries;

(b) the total amount of export of handicraft items during the last five years;

(c) the impediments being faced by the handicraft industries and their exporters; and

(d) the details of the plans Government initiated to redress the grievances of exporters of handicraft items?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) For promotion of export of handicrafts and Carpets, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts and Carpet Export Promotion Council are already in existence.

(b) The total amount of export of handicraft items during the last five years is as under:—

Sl. No.	Year	Total export (Rs. in crores).	
1.	1993-94	3797.06	
2.	1994-95	4517.52	
3.	1995-96	4621.69	
4.	1996-97	5594.80	(Provi-
5.	1997-98	6457.69	sional)

(c) The impediments being faced by the handicraft industries and their exporters include: availability of uninterrupted power supply; bad road conditions; classification of artmetalwares for duty drawback; non-introduction of Shatabdi Express on Delhi—Moradabad Section; non-availability of air-strip and five star hotel at Moradabad; need expressed by exporters for some changes in labour laws; closure of many saw mills at Saharanpur etc.

(d) Concerted efforts are bieng made by the Government to redress the grievances of exporters of handicrafts item by taking up their issues with the concerned authorities. The progress of action taken is being reviewed periodically at high level meetings.

Withdrawal of Subsidy from Janata Cloth

1080. SHRI K. R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that last year Government widthdrew the subsidised Janata Cloth Scheme as reported in the news item published in the Indian Express dated 14th November, 1997;

(b) whether the scheme was withdrawn without advance intimation by the Finance Ministry;

(c) whether as a result of this, weavers in several States have lost subsidy amounting to about Rs. 60 crores; and

(d) the action taken by Government to relieve the misery of twenty lakh affected weavers?